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Girl 'Spy' Gets Quick Trial

After Confessing To Reds

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(as told to Peter Hahn)
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NEW YORK — I stood, completely without clothes, in the prison's "reception center." Despite the warm May day, I shivered.

After a thorough search of body and clothes, the chief ma-

tron handed me my prison kit — a discarded army uniform, dyed blue, toothbrush, plastic cup, a straw mattress — and I was marched to cell number 197 of Homenschoenhause, interrogation center of the East German secret police.

I had been arrested on Jan. 2, 1962, after having duped the Soviets into believing I spied for them by feeding them homemade "secret documents."

After five months in Russian KGB — secret police — jails, I had confessed to the deception. And as soon as the KGB was satisfied that the "agents" they had been chasing were non-existent, I had been handed to the East German "Stasi" — Ministry for State Security (MFS) — for "processing."

Prison routine was keyed to let prisoners have contact only with their cellmates, guards, and questioners. My cell mate was a girl accused of spying for the British.

All through the day, the walls of the prison were alive with subdued tapping, in code. This is how I "met" the other American prisoner.

I had found out that he was in a nearby cell, when I heard a scuffle in the cell above me, followed by a muffled, but distinguishable American old-fashioned cussword.

THIS IS THE FIFTH installment in the exclusive account of the author's experience at the hands of Communist agents. Miss Hammerstein was released on March 26 after serving 27 months in prison and East German jails.

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Heedless of the guards, I climbed on the small table in our cell and, placing my mouth as close as possible to the window above, I belted out the lyrics to "I Am An American . . ."

Almost immediately, my countryman started banging on the wall. "A-R-E Y-O-U A-M-E-R-I-C-A-N" I answered, "G-A-B-R-I-E-L-E H-A-M-M-E-R-S-T-E-I-N N-E-W Y-O-R-K." "J-E-A-N L-O-B-A, C-A-L-I-F-O-R-N-I-A," came the reply.

In the weeks that followed, we swapped case histories and experiences. Loba had been arrested for helping several East German friends escape to freedom. Later, he was discovered while tapping out a message to me, and moved to another cell.

My interrogation, in the meantime, continued along the same lines as my questioning by the Russians. When I ended my brief stint for the CIA, I had given the CIA a complete report on my activities for them. And somehow, probably through a true double agent, the KGB had got its hands on it. So I admitted to my deception of the Russian intelligence net.

My questioner was a cynical young lieutenant, whom I called "Bubi" — German for "inexperienced young whelp."

All my demands, either to see a U.S. military liaison officer, or to see a lawyer, went unheeded, so I decided to take action, and hoped that — if I caused enough trouble — I would be sent to a prison hospital rather than a penitentiary.

I smashed whatever I could of the cell furnishings, with the result that my cellmate and I were transferred to another cell, where we were allowed to read. We smashed the furniture here, too, and won a second transfer, and additional privileges. (This happened only because I was a "foreigner," and because the MFS was accountable to the Russians for my welfare. The Russians in turn, wanted nothing to happen to foreign nationals in their hands.)

I continued to defy the prison routine as best I could. Then, one day late in July, Lieutenant "Bubi" handed me my indictment.

Two days later, I was driven to Neustrelitz, a filthy transient jail crawling with vermin; and — the next day — to Neubrandenburg, where the trial was scheduled. Here I discovered that my family had arranged for Dr. Vogel, the lawyer who helped to effect the exchange of U-2 pilot Powers against Red master spy Rudolf Abel, to represent me in court.

We were the first to arrive at the courthouse. Half an hour later, the judge and two "lay judges" — whose only legal qualification was membership in the Communist Party — appeared. Then the lady prosecutor walked in, followed by my interrogator. The judge opened the proceedings, and told me that "my lawyer had not shown up."

I asked whether I could make a statement. He nodded, and I got up, saying, "I am an American citizen. Since my government does not recognize the existence of the so-called 'German Democratic Republic,' I cannot accept the jurisdiction of this court."

Still, the trial proceeded. The prosecutor demanded a penalty of six years.

At the end of the trial the judge said: "The prisoner, Gabriele Hammerstein, has been found guilty of the charges brought against her. In the name of the people, I sentence her to serve six years at hard labor."

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